

الرحمة



Mercy

notes for a talk given by:

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إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ

inna-llāha lā yughayyiru mā bi-qawmi
ḥatta yughayyira ma bi-^oanfusihi

Truly Allāh does not change a people
until they change what is in them selves.
(Sūratu-r-Ra^oad 13:11)



“Imagine a boat which has capsized
and everybody is trying to save themselves.
That is the position of a human being in this world.”
Ḥasan al-Baṣrah

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

wa 'idhā jā'aka-l-ladhīna yu'minūna bi-āyātina
fa-qul salāmun °alaykum
kataba rabbukum °ala nafsihi-r-raḥmah

And when those who believe in Our revelations come to you,
Say: Peace be unto you!
Your Lord has written Mercy on His Self.
(Sūratu-l-°An°ām 6:54)



وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa māā °arsalnākāā °illā-raḥmatal-li-l-°ālamīn
And We have not sent you except as a Mercy for all the worlds.
(Sūratu-l-°Ambiyāā° 21:107)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ مِنْ رَبِّي
هَذَا بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ



qul °innamāā °attabi°u mā yūḥāā °ilayya mir-rabbī
hadḥā baṣā°iru mir-rabbikum
wa hudan wa raḥmatun li-qawmin yu'minūn

Say, 'I follow only what has been revealed to me from my Lord.'
This is clear insight from your Lord,
and guidance and mercy, for people who believe.
(Sūratu-l-A°rāf 7:203)



وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

wa nunazzilu mina-l-qur°āni mā huwa shifā°un
wa raḥmatun li-l-mu'minīn

We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur°ān that which is a healing
and a mercy to those who believe.
(Sūratu-l-°Isrā° 17:82)

الرَّحْمَنُ • عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ • خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ • عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

ar-raḥmān • °allama-l-quṛ'ān • khalaqa-l-'insān • °allamhu-l-bayān

The Merciful, who taught the Qur'ān, who created the human,
who taught him how to communicate

(Sūratu-r-Raḥmān 55:1-4)



وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

wa °idhā qurīya-l-quṛ'ānu fā-'s-tami'ū lahu

wa °anṣitū la°allakum turḥamūn

When the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it with attention,
and be quiet so that hopefully you will gain mercy.

(Sūratu-l-A'rāf 7:204)



This is the mercy of the Prophet ﷺ, who is mercy gifted to us by Allāh ﷻ. “We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds.”

The first ḥadīth (حديث) the scholar teaches his pupils is, “The All-Merciful ﷻ has mercy on those who are merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth so that the One above the heavens will have mercy on you.” (at-Tirmidhī).

There is an ḥadīth that tells how the Prophet ﷺ had mercy on a tree trunk, “We were ordered to have mercy upon those who are on earth. “Who” here denotes man, animal and inanimate objects as well. The Prophet ﷺ even had mercy on inanimate objects. He ﷺ used to deliver the khutbah leaning on a trunk, but he left it for a wooden pulpit made for him.”

“The companions in the mosque heard the trunk moaning because the Messenger ﷺ had left it. He ﷺ stopped the sermon, descended from the pulpit (minbar/منبر), and embraced the trunk to his noble chest until it stopped moaning. The Prophet ﷺ confided some words to the trunk until it stopped moaning, then he buried it under the pulpit. The companions asked, ‘O Messenger of Allāh, we saw you talking to the tree trunk, what did you tell it?’

“He ﷺ replied, ‘I told it: “Wouldn’t you love to be with me in paradise”? So it stopped. By moaning the tree trunk showed that it longed for the Prophet ﷺ. He ﷺ in turn had mercy on that tree trunk by descending from the *mimbar* and embracing it.”

“The All-Merciful ﷺ has mercy on those who are merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth so that Allāh ﷻ will have mercy on you.”

From that we begin our talk today.

We know that unlike the Qur’ān, the order in which ṣaḥābīth are presented or read is dependent only on the choice of the compiler, teacher, or reader. There is no command that they must be studied in a particular order. So the first ḥadīth became first not because of an explicit injunction, but purely by the choice, and continuing choice, of those involved in the study of ḥadīth ash-sharīf.

This is the message from the Prophet ﷺ who was declared, as we have noted, by Allāh ﷻ to be a “Mercy to the entire creation.” It is therefore appropriate that his ṣummah chose that ḥadīth to be the first for its study. There is no other call for mercy that is more universal or more inspiring. Have mercy on all the people. And do it because you yourself need the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ. Be merciful to the other creations so the Creator will have mercy on you. Your mercy should have no bounds. It should reach all human beings. Another ḥadīth in Bukhārī and Muslim states: “Those who have no mercy on other human beings will not receive the Mercy of Allāh.” It is important to note that in this second ḥadīth the word used is *nās*, that is people, not just believers. And not just human beings, but also animals. For “those on earth” include all living things.

Kindness, love, mercy. These are among the most important defining words for the collective personality of the ṣummah. We begin every act in the name of Allāh who is Universally Merciful and Singularly Compassionate. We invite the entire world, as a whole and individually to the Mercy of their Creator. Mercy to all the creation and all within in. We must seek the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ for all, for if we claim to follow the *sunnah* we prove it by being merciful to all of His creations. That is the foundation of real mercy.

This mercy is not a public relations ploy or a propaganda tool. It is not driven by a love of headlines. Such motivations are only a show of mercy, but the real mercy requires the true deep sincerity.

Mercy cannot be reached by seekers unless they are fully sincere and single-minded in their devotion (*mukhḥliṣ*/مخلص).

There are two stages of sincerity. The first stage is that of carrying out all religious injunctions for the sake of Allāh ﷻ alone. The second stage is of devoting one's entire self exclusively to Allāh ﷻ. The first stage is indicated by the following ^oāyāt:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ
وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ

wa ma ^oumirū ^oilla li-ya^cbudu-llāha mukhḥlisīna lahu-d-dīna ḥunafā^o
wa yuqīmu-ṣ-ṣalāta wa yu^otu-z-zakata wa dhālika dīnu-l-qayyimah

They were only ordered to worship Allāh,
making their dīn sincerely His as people of pure natural belief,
and to establish salat and pay zakat – that is the dīn of the upright.
(Sūrah al-Bayyinah, 98:5)

The second stage is indicated by the following verse:

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ
^oillā ^oibāda-llāhi-l-mukhḥlaṣīn

Except for the sincere (^oibāda-llāhi mukhḥlaṣīn) worshippers of Allāh.
(Sūrah as Sāāāffat 37:128)

There is a well known ḥadīth to the effect that he who has kept himself pure for Allāh ﷻ for 40 days, fountains of wisdom flow from his heart to his tongue.

Allāh ﷻ has, in certain places in the Qurʾān, described deeds as being virtuous and pious (*ṣaliḥ*/صلح). For example we read: “Whoever did a wholesome deed (^oāmal ṣāliḥ)” and at other places He describes people themselves as being *ṣaliḥ*. Allāh ﷻ says: “Surely he was one of the sincere (pure, wholesome or upstanding) ones (*ṣāliḥ*/صالح).” From this it is obvious that one's claim to sincerity depends on one's deeds and one cannot be said to be sincere unless one is sincere in all one's deeds and in all that one does or says.

Both our showing and seeking of mercy must stem from this encompassing sincerity and not from any desire to be seen in one way or another. It must be, as the saying goes, straight from the heart.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْدينِ • فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ
 وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمُسْكِينِ • قَوْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ
 الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ • الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَءَاوْنَ
 وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

bismi-llāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm

°ara°ayta-l-ladhi yukadhdhibu-bi-d-dīn •

fa-dhālika-l-ladhi yadu°-°u-yatīm (a)

wa lā yaḥuḍḍu °ala ṭa°āmi-l-miskīn •

fa-waylil-l-l-muṣallīn (a) alladhīna hum °aā ṣalāṭihim sāhūn (a)

°alladhīna hum yurāā°ūūn (a) wa yamna°ūna-l-mā°ūn •

In the Name of Allāh, The Merciful, the Compassionate

Have you seen the one who denies the dīn?

That is the one who turns away the orphan –

and does not encourage the feeding of the poor.

Woe to those who pray and are unmindful in their prayers –

who want to be seen and [yet] refuse small [acts of] kindness.

(Sūratu-l-Mā°ūn 107:1-7)

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said : “The best house among Muslims is the house in which an orphan is well treated and the worst house is the house in which an orphan is treated badly”.

°A°isha رضي الله عنها said : A desert Arab came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “Do you kiss children? We do not kiss them.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “What can I do for you if Allāh ﷻ has removed mercy from your heart ?” (Bukḥarī, Muslim)

°Umar was heard to say, “Anyone who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy. Anyone who does not forgive will not be forgiven. Anyone who does not turn in repentance will not be turned to nor will he be protected or guarded.” (Bukḥarī)

After understanding the need for sincerity in the matter of mercy we must next understand the nature of what The Mercy is by understanding what exactly are the roots of the word ‘*rahmah*’.



The Meaning of ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm
The Universally Merciful — The Singulartly Compassionate

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

The root of both ar-rahmān and ar-rahīm is *raḥam* whose literal meaning is the womb, and by extension, “to feel sympathy or pity” indicates something of the utmost tenderness which provides protection and nourishment, and from which all of creation is brought into being. The root *raḥam* has additional meanings of kinship, relationship, loving-kindness, mercy, compassion, and nourishing-tenderness.

Thus, both *rahmān* and *rahīm* arise from the womb from which all creation emerges and simultaneously conveys a sense of tenderness, loving-kindness, protection and nourishment.

The term *rahmān* describes the womb of all creation which is endlessly radiating, endlessly nourishing, regardless of who or what is receiving the endless flow of blessings.

The sun shines on all beings, the air is breathed by the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, men and women. All beings are both made of water and all drink the water of life, for without that water there is no life, just as without the mercy nothing could be or is.

As such *rahmān* conveys the idea of fullness and extensiveness, indicating the great quality of love and mercy which engulfs the entirety of creation without regard to any effort or request on our part.

According to ʾIbn Qayyūm (1350CE/751H.), *rahmān* describes the quality of abounding Grace which is inherent in and inseparable from the Almighty. Further based on the *Tafsīr* of ʾIbn Kathīr we can say *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm* are two names of Allāh ﷻ derived from the same root (*raḥam*). The Name ar-Raḥmān has more meanings that pertain to mercy than ar-Raḥīm.

There is a statement by °Ibn Jarīr that indicates that there is a consensus on this meaning. Further, al-Qurtubī said, “The proof that both these names are derived (from *raḥam*) is what at-Tirmidhī recorded and graded Saḥīḥ by °Abdu-r-Raḥmān bin °Awf who said that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say,

“Allah the Exalted said, ‘I am ar-Raḥmān. I created the Raḥm (womb, i.e. family relations) and derived a name for it from My Name. Hence, whoever keeps it, I will keep ties to him, and whoever severs it, I will sever ties with him.” He then said, “This is a text that indicates the derivation.” He then said, “Some Arabs denied the name *ar-Raḥmān*, because of their ignorance about Allāh ﷻ and His attributes.” This conceivably due to its grounding in the feminine and their unwillingness to attribute femininity to Allāh ﷻ.

al-Qurtubī said, “It was said that both ar-Raḥmān and ar-Raḥīm have the same meaning, such as the words *Nadman* and *Nadīm*, as Abu °Ubayd has stated. Abu °Ali al-Farīsī said, ‘ar-Raḥmān is exclusively for Allāh ﷻ and is a name that encompasses every type of mercy that Allāh ﷻ has whereas ar-Raḥīm is that which effects the believers, for Allah said,

وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

wa kāna bi-l-mu°minīna raḥīmā

And He is ever merciful (*raḥīmā*) to the believers.)

(Sūratu-l-Aḥzāb 33:43)

Qurtubī continues by saying, “They are two soft names, but one of them is softer than the other .”

قُلْ اِدْعُوا اللَّهَ اَوْ اِدْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ؕ اَيَّٰ مَا تَدْعُوْنَ فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنٰى

quli °id°ū-llāha °awi °id°ū-r-raḥmana

°ayyan ma tad°ū falahu-l-°asma°ul-ḥusna

Say [O Muḥammad]

‘Call on Allāh or call on the Universally Merciful,
whichever you call upon, the Most Beautiful Names are His.’

(Sūratu-l-°Isrā° 17:110)

Ibn Jarir said; “He is ar-Raḥmān with all creation and ar-Raḥīm with the believers.”

وَأَسْأَلُ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا
أَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ آلِهَةً يُعْبَدُونَ

wa'as'alu man 'arsalnā min qablika mir-rusulinā
'aja'alnā min dūni-r-rahmani 'alihatañy-yu'badūn

Ask [O Muḥammad] those We sent before you as Our Messengers:

Have We ever designated
any gods to be worshipped besides the All-Merciful?
(Sūratu-z-Zukhruf 43:45)



When the false prophet, Musaylimah the Liar (*al-kadhḥāb*/لَكَذَّاب), called himself the Raḥmān of Yamamah, Allāh ﷻ made him known by the name “Liar” and exposed him as one. Hence, whenever Musaylimah is mentioned, he is described as “the Liar” and he became an example throughout time for lying among the residents of the cities and villages and the residents of the deserts, the *beduw*.

Therefore, Allāh ﷻ first mentioned His Name – Allāh – that is exclusively His and described this Name as ar-Raḥmān, which no one else is allowed to use, for as Allah ﷻ said and we have mentioned, Say [O Muḥammad]: “Invoke Allāh or invoke ar-Raḥmān, by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.” (Sūratu-l-‘Isrā’ 17:110)

Only Musaylimah and those who followed his misguided ways described Musaylimah by the Name of ar-Raḥmān.

But as for the Name of Allāh ﷻ ‘ar-Raḥīm’, Allāh ﷻ has described others by it. For instance, Allāh ﷻ said,

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ
حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

laqadā jā'akum rasūlum-min 'aāfusikum 'azīzun 'alayhi mā 'anittum
ḥariṣun 'alaykum bi-l-mu'minīna ra'ūfur-rahīm

There hath come unto you a messenger from amongst you
concerned over your suffering, anxious over you,
towards the believers he is compassionate, merciful (*rahīm*).

(Sūratu-t-Tawbah 9:128)

Allāh ﷻ has also described some of His creation using some of His other Names. For instance, Allāh ﷻ said,

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

°innā khālaqna-l-°insāna min nuṭṭatin °amshājīn nabātālīhi
fa-ja°alnāhu samī°an baṣīrā

We created man from a mingled drop to test him,
and We made him hearing (*samī°a*) and seeing (*baṣīrā*).

(Sūratu-l-°Inṣān 76:2)

Thus there are several of Names of Allāh ﷻ that are used as names for others, but the Name of Universal Mercy (*ar-raḥmān*) is exclusive to Allāh ﷻ alone. We can sense the sublimity of His Name *ar-Raḥman* from reflecting on the following °ayāt of Allāh ﷻ:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

ar-raḥmānu °ala-l-°arshī °istawa

The Universally Merciful

is established on the throne of His Almightyness:

(Sūrah Ṭā Hā 20:5:)



اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ° الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا

°istawa °ala-l-°arsh : ar-raḥmānu fa-s-°al bihi khabīrā

He is established on the throne of His Almightyness.

The Universally Merciful

Ask, then, about Him, [the] One who is [truly] aware.

(Sūratu-l-Furqān 25:59)

Allāh ﷻ thus mentioned the °Istawa (اسْتَوَى) or His establishment on the Seat of Universal Authority along with His Name, ar-Rahman, to indicate that His Mercy encompasses all of His creation for as we said in the beginning – He has written this Mercy on Himself.

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

kataba rabbukum °alā nafsīhi-r-raḥmah

Your Lord has written Mercy on His Self.

(Sūratu-l-°An°ām 6:54)

From contemplating these ʿāyāt we can begin to understand the paramount importance of Mercy within the ʿIslāmīc dispensation.



Hence, Allah started the *Tasmiyah* (the *Basmallah*) with His Name, Allāh ﷻ, and described Himself first and foremost as the Universal Mercy (*ar-raḥmān*) which is softer and more totally inclusive than the Singularly Compassionate (*ar-raḥīm*). We can also say that the Names of Allāh ﷻ are mentioned according to His choice, as we know from a ḥadīth of Umm Salmah who stated that the recitation of the Prophet ﷺ was slow and clear and proceeded letter by letter,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ • الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ •
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ • مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

bi-ʿismi-llāhi-r-rahmāni-r-rahīm • al-ḥamduli-llāhi rabbil-ʿalamīn •
ar-r-rahmāni-r-rahīmi • māliki yawmi-d-dīn •

By the Name of Allāh

The Universally Merciful, the Singularly Compassionate.

Praise be to Allāh, Lord of All the Worlds.

The Universally Merciful, the Singularly Compassionate.

Master of the Day of Judgement.

(Sūratu-l-Fātiḥah 1:1-4)



ar-Raḥīm

Bestower of Mercy, The Singularly Compassionate

Allāh ﷻ is the Most Merciful to both disbelievers and believers, and to the more pious and the less pious. In the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr it is reported that the effects of the attribute *ar-Raḥmān* extend to all creation, while those of *ar-Raḥīm* are confined to the believers.

وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

wa kāna bi-l-muʾmnīna raḥīmā

and He is Ever-Merciful to the believers.

(Sūratu-l-ʿAḥzāb 33:43)

Allāh ﷻ in His Mercy rewards the believers in the Hereafter and due to their belief and righteous deeds admits them to the Jannah.

When one *knows* without any doubt that Allāh ﷻ in the Hereafter confines His mercy to the believers (and deals with the unbelievers with His Justice), one will seek to worship Allāh ﷻ and come nearer to Him in order to deserve His Mercy.

رَحْمَنَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَرَحِيمَهُمَا

raḥmāna-d-dunyā wa-l-°ākḥira wa raḥīmahuma
the *raḥmān* and the *raḥīm* of this world and the hereafter



Further understandings of the terms: al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm
[from Sharḥ al-°Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah]

ar-Raḥmān and ar-Raḥīm are two of the names of Allāh ﷻ which refer to the attribute of Mercy.

ar-Raḥmān refers to the vastness of the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ, and ar-Raḥīm refers to its effect on the creation. So ar-Raḥmān is the Owner of vast Mercy, and ar-Raḥīm is the Owner of Mercy that encompasses His creation.

Shaykh Ibn °Uṭḥaymīn said: “ar-Raḥmān is the Owner of vast mercy, because the *fa°lān* form in the Arabic language indicates vastness and abundance, as it is said *rajal gḥadbān* (a very angry man) when a man is filled with anger.

“ar-Raḥīm is a name which refers to the action, as the *fa°īl* form refers to the doer of an action. So the phrase “ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm” indicates that the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ is vast, as is understood from the name ar-Raḥmān, and that it encompasses His creation, as is understood from the name ar-Raḥīm. This is what some of the scholars mean when they said that ar-Raḥmān refers to mercy in a general sense and ar-Raḥīm refers to mercy that is specifically for the believers. But what we have mentioned is more accurate.”

Abu Hurairah ؓ reported in a Ḥadīth Qudsī that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say, “When Allah created the creatures, He wrote in the Book, which is with Him over His Throne: ‘Truly, My Mercy prevails over My Wrath’” [al-Bukḥarī and Muslim].

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ said: “(Allāh ﷻ wrote) ‘My Mercy dominates My Wrath.’”

In yet another narration the Prophet ﷺ said: “(Allāh ﷻ wrote), ‘My Mercy surpasses My Wrath.’”

Imām al-Khāṭabī states that here the word ‘Kitāb’ translated as Book means a decision of Allāh ﷻ which He has already made, an instance of which is the following °ayat:

كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي ؕ

kataba-llāhu la°aghlibanna °ana wa rusulī

Allāh has written:

“It is I and My messengers who must prevail”

(Sūratul-Mujādalah 58:21)

In this °ayat the Arabic word ‘Kataba’ (كَتَبَ) or Book is used in the sense of *Qadā°* (قَضَاءٌ) meaning that which is decided or decreed; *Kitābah* (كتابة) or Writing means that Allāh ﷻ prior to creation has written everything that has existed, exists or will exist including the destiny of all creatures in the “*Lawḥim-Mahfūz*” or the Preserved Tablet. “Allāh ﷻ is on the °Arsh (the Throne of Allah or the Seat of Absolute Authority) and this Book is with Him.” (Ibn Hajr Asqalani, *Fath al-Bārī* (فتح الباري), Kitāb at-Tawḥīd / Bab: Wa kana °Arshuhu °ala-l-Ma°)

Further Ḥadīth on Mercy

Abu Hurairah ؓ reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allāh has divided mercy into one hundred parts; and He retained with Him ninety-nine parts, and sent down to earth one part. Through this one part creatures deal with one another with compassion, so much so that an animal lifts its hoof over its young lest it should hurt it.” [Nº.420 in al-Bukḥarī and Muslim]

Another narration is: The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allāh has one hundred mercies, out of which He has sent down only one for jinn, mankind, animals and insects, through which they love one another and have compassion for one another; and by it, wild animals care for their young. Allāh has retained ninety-nine mercies to deal kindly with His slaves on the Day of Resurrection.” [al-Bukḥarī and Muslim].

Another narration reported by Salmān Al-Farīsī رضي الله عنه in Muslim: The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allāh ﷻ has one hundred mercies, out of which one mercy is used by his creation for mutual love and affection. Ninety-nine mercies are kept for the Day of Resurrection.”

Another narration is: The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allāh ﷻ created one hundred units of mercy on the Day He created the heavens and the earth. Each one of them can contain all that is between the heavens and the earth. Of them, he put one on earth, through which a mother has compassion for her children and animals and birds have compassion for one another. On the Day of Resurrection, He will perfect and complete His Mercy.” That is, He will use all the hundred units of mercy for his worshippers on that Day.

From this ḥadīth it is clear that kind and compassionate treatment is loved by Allāh ﷻ and is in fact His Blessing and Benevolence. This is the reason He has given a part of it to His creatures, and a person who is so hard-hearted that he is not even aware of it has a defect which is extremely displeasing to Allāh ﷻ. Moreover, it is a sign that such a person is deprived of Divine blessing and mercy.

Summing up the lexical dimensions of these two terms and the twin phrase which contains them, we might say:

ar-Raḥmān : الرحمن

Describes that aspect of the source of all creation which is endlessly radiating, endlessly nourishing, regardless of who or what is receiving the endless flow of blessings.

ar-Raḥmān conveys the idea of fullness and extensiveness, indicating the great quality of love and mercy which encompasses all of creation without regard to any effort or request on our part.

According to Ibn Qayyum, *ar-Raḥmān* describes the quality of abounding Grace which is inherent in and inseparable from Allāh ﷻ.

ar-Raḥīm : الرحيم

On the other hand, the term *ar-Raḥīm* describes that aspect of the source which is issued forth only in response to the actions and behavior of the recipient. It is in this manner that Allāh ﷻ takes ten steps toward us when we take even a single step toward Allāh ﷻ.

ar-Raḥīm conveys the idea of constant renewal and giving of a munificent reward in response to the quality of our deeds and thoughts.

According to Ibn Qayyum, *ar-Raḥīm* expresses the continuous manifestation of the Grace in our lives and its effect upon us as a result of our own activities.

ar-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm : الرحمن الرحيم

Thus we can say that, in general, *ar-Raḥmān* points toward the Beneficent One whose endless outpouring of love and mercy are continually showered upon all of creation, whilst *ar-Raḥīm* points toward the Merciful One whose love and mercy are manifested in that which is received as the consequence of one's deeds.

Thus the phrase *ar-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm* is a recognition and honoring of the womb of all existence, the source of all blessings, the source of all compassion, the source of all mercy who gives endlessly to us and who also responds according to our moral integrity, our harmony with all of creation and our love of Allāh ﷻ.



This completes the introduction to the subject of our talk and essay on the Mercy or *Raḥmah* in accord with how *Raḥmah* is conceived of and generally understood in Qurʾān and Ḥadīth.

Next we to try to understand how this Divine Quality manifests in the world and in our own lives

In the creation of humankind, the Divine Qualities of forgiveness (*maghfirah*/مغفرة) and mercy (*raḥmah*/رحمة) and kindness (*lutf*/لطف) are also manifested. Human beings were created good and pure with a natural awareness of good and evil. Allāh ﷻ also created in human beings desires, and gave them an ability to control those desires according to Divine Law or to indulge them. Allāh ﷻ created human beings knowing that they would disobey Him, so consequently He taught human beings, beginning with Ādam and Hawāʾ (آدم وحواء), how to seek forgiveness, repent and thereby purify themselves of their sins. Ādam and Hawāʾ ﷺ represent a pattern for all humans to follow. They forgot the order of Allāh ﷻ, and Shayṭān played on their desires. After they had disobeyed Allāh ﷻ, they turned back to Him in repentance, and He forgave them.

In humankind's disobedience and subsequent turning back (*tawba* /توبة) to Allāh ﷻ in repentance, the Divine Qualities of total forgiveness and infinite mercy become manifest. The Prophet ﷺ informed his followers of this reality, saying:

“If you did not commit sins and turn to Allāh, seeking His forgiveness, He would have replaced you with another people who would sin and ask for forgiveness and He would forgive them.” (Muslim)

The action of seeking forgiveness (*maghfirah*/مغفرة) is called *ʾistighfār* (إستغفار), which means seeking protection from the evil of what is past, whereas *tawbah* (توبة) means returning to Allāh ﷻ and seeking protection from the evil of one's own bad deeds which one fears may lie ahead in the future.

The whole subject of *maghfirah* and the forgiveness of Allāh ﷻ for the evil we have done is, perhaps, the most obvious, or at least readily observable, manifestation of the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ.

Since we are, if nothing else, the children of our parents, in this case our original parents Ādam and Hawāʾ ﷺ, we are inclined to disobedience in regards to the prescriptions or claims of Allāh ﷻ. There is no one who is without sin – no one who has not, at one time or another, rebelled against Allāh ﷻ and gone outside of the *hudūd* (حدود) meaning the boundaries that Allāh ﷻ has made for us to live a life of felicity and harmony by living within the boundaries of what is prescribed or what Allāh ﷻ has claimed for us.

“Oh son of Ādam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Ādam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Ādam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth or the foam on the waves of all the oceans and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.” Ḥadīth Qudsī 34

Indeed the two promises that Allāh ﷻ made to our parents when He removed them from their paradisaical life in the Garden and sent them here to his earth was that He would always grant them Guidance (*hudā*/الهدى) and Forgiveness (*maghfirah*/مغفرة).

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ؕ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ •
 قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ؕ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا
 خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ •

fatalaqqā ādamu mir-rabbihi kalimātin fa-tāba °alayhi
 °innahu huwa-t-tawwābu-r-raḥīm •

qulnā ihbiṭū minhā jamī'an fa-°immā ya°tiyannakum minnī hudañ
 fa-man tabi°a hudāya falā ḵhawfun °alayhim wa lā hum yaḥzanūn •

Then Adam received some words [of guidance] from his Lord
 and He turned [in repentance] towards him.

He is the Ever-Returning, the Singularly Compassionate.

We said, 'Go down from it [the Garden], both of you!

Then when guidance comes to you from Me,
 those who follow My guidance will feel no fear
 and will know no sorrow.'

(Sūrau-l-Baqarah 2:37-38)



هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ؕ
 وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

huwa °alladhī °aanzala-s-sakīnata fī qulūbi-l-mu'minīna
 li-yazdādū °imānan ma°a °imānihim
 wa-lillāhi junūdu-s-samāwāti wa-l-°arḍi
 wa kāna-llāhu °alīman ḥakīmā

He it is Who sent down His (gift of) inner peace and reassurance
 into the hearts of the believers,

so that they might add faith to their faith.

To Allāh belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth;
 and Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

(Sūrau-l-Faḥ 48:4)

When we look closely we will understand that the whole process of
 the 'expulsion' from the Garden was not to lessen our parents but
 rather to fulfill them, in accord with the words of Allāh ﷻ:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

wa-^oidh qala rabbuka li-l-mala^oikati inni jā^oilun fi-l-arḍi khalīfah

and when you Sustainer said to the angels:

“Truly, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it.”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:30)

The expulsion from the Garden and the descent of our parents ﷺ upon the earth was honorable and not shameful or ignominious for, in truth, they were fulfilling the Plan of Allāh ﷻ, for if you notice He does not say He will establish, “a khalīfah in the Heavens or in the Garden”, but rather upon the earth.

So their expulsion was, in truth, the fulfillment of His Words from before their creation, and in accord with the plan of Allāh ﷻ from the beginning, but first it was necessary that they sin and then repent.

So we have to look at repentance and turning from sin as a process of “interior conversion,” and not merely a simple act of turning away from a particular sin or vice.

Now when we come back to look at Mercy we see it from an entirely different angle, for had they not done what they did or —

“If you did not commit sins and turn to Allāh, seeking His forgiveness, He would have replaced you with another people who would sin and ask for forgiveness and He would forgive them.” (Muslim)

In fact, Allāh ﷻ loves to pardon and forgive,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ

^oinna-llāha yuḥibbu-t-tawwābīn

surely Allāh loves those who repent.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:222)

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

wa tūbū ^oila-llāhi jami^oan ^oayyuha-l-mu^ominūna la^oallakum tufliḥūn

Turn towards Allāh, Oh believers, so that you may be successful.”

(Sūratu-n-Nūr 24:31)

From this we learn to never despair of the Mercy of Allah ﷻ – in accord with the ḥadīth we cited earlier, “When Allāh completed the creation, He wrote in His Book which is with Him on His Throne, ‘My Mercy overpowers My Wrath.’”

I swear, “by Mount Sinai, and by the Written Book, by the Outstretched Parchment, by the Oft-visited House (*al-ka‘bah*/الكعبة), by the elevated canopy, by the swollen sea; oh son of Ādam ﷺ! I have not created this hell fire but for the unbelievers, and for the miser, and for the gossip, and for the one disinherited by his father (*a‘aq*), and for the one who does not pay zakāt, and for the eater of interest (*ribā*/ربا), and for the adulterer (*zānīh*/زانية). I have created it for the collector of what is unlawful (*ḥarām*/حرام), and for the bad neighbor. I have created the fire for all except those who repent (*tawbah*), and perform good deeds (*‘amilū-ṣ-ṣaliḥāt*/عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَات). Oh My servants! Have mercy upon your selves! Indeed your bodies are weak, and the way is far, and the burden is heavy, and the path is thin, and the fire is high, and the caller is ʾIsrāfīl (إسرافيل), and the Judge is the Lord of the Universe ﷻ.”

Look to His words, “Oh, My servants! Have mercy upon your selves.” Now the coin is flipped and the mirror is turned.

We began by mentioning His Mercy and now He tells us, “Have mercy upon your selves” and shows us, as He showed our parents ﷺ, the Way to that Mercy which is though *maghfirah* and *tawbah*.

And that is the Mercy. For without a Way there is no where to go and no how to get there.

Oh son of Ādam ﷺ! As much as your heart desires towards this world that much My love departs from your heart. Indeed, I will not let My love and love of this world gather in one heart. Be alone for my worship. Purify your deeds from showing-off, then I will make you wear the clothes of My love. Turn towards Me and be ready for My Remembrance, I will remember you in front of My Angels.

Oh son of Ādam ﷺ! remember Me with humility, I will remember you with My Blessings. Remember Me by fighting with your soul, I will remember you by watching over you. Remember Me on the earth and I will remember you in the grave.

Remember Me in bounties and in good health, I will remember you in difficulties and loneliness. Remember Me in good health and wealth, I will remember you in your poverty and hardship. Remember Me with truth and purity, I will remember you in the exalted heaven. Remember Me by being kind towards poor people, I will remember you in heaven, the place to be resorted to. Remember Me by submission, I will remember you with divinity. Remember Me by tears, I will remember you with Mercy. Remember Me with words, I will remember you with rewards. Remember Me by abandoning this world, I will remember you by giving you salvation of the hereafter. Remember Me in your extreme difficulties, I will remember you with perfect salvation.

Oh son of Ādam ﷺ! Remember Me, I will answer your call. Cry to Me without carelessness (*ghaflah*), I will answer you without any delay. Call upon Me with an empty heart, I will answer you by promoting you to a higher station. Call upon me with purity and piety, I will answer you by presenting you with the Garden. Call upon Me with fear and hope, I will make all your affairs easy and successful. Call upon me by My Beautiful Names, I will meet your high demands. Call upon Me in this perishable and vanishing house, I will answer you in the house of reward and eternity.

Oh son of Ādam ﷺ! how long are you going to say *Allāh, Allāh, Allāh*, while you have others besides Allāh in your heart. Your tongue is remembering Allāh, but you fear others beside Allāh. If you would have known Allāh you would not have given importance to any thing besides Allāh. You commit sins and you don't seek pardon from Allāh? Truly seeking pardon and constantly sinning at the same time is the repentance of liars (*tawbatu-l-kadhḥābīn*), Allāh is not unjust to his worshippers!

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ

man °amila ṣāliḥan fa-li-nafsihi wa man °asā° fa-°alayha
wa mā rabbuka bi-ḍḥallāmin li-l-°abid

Whoever acts rightly, it is to his own good.

Whoever does evil, it is to his detriment.

Your Lord does not wrong His worshippers.

(Sūratu-l-Fussilat 41:46)

Oh son of Ādam ﷺ! Obey Me to the extent of your deeds towards Me. Disobey Me to the extent of your ability to tolerate the Fire. Collect wealth in this world according to the length of your stay here. Collect for the hereafter (*al-ʿākhirah* الْآخِرَةُ) according to the length of your stay there. Do not think that your death is far in the distance and that the bounties you receive from Allāh will always be available, or that your sins are hidden.

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

ʾāfahasibātum ʾannamā khalaqānakum ʿabathāñw-
wa ʾannakum ʾilaynā lā turjaʿūn

Did you suppose that We created you for amusement
and that you would not return to Us?

(Sūratu-l-Muʾminūn 23:115)

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ ؕ
وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ ؕ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

wa mā hadhihi-l-ḥayātu-d-dunyā ʾillā lahwun wa laʿibā :
wa-ʾinna-d-dara-l-ʾākhirata lahiya-l-ḥayawān : law kānū yaʿlamūn

The life of the world is but a diversion and a game
and surely the home of the Hereafter – that is Life, if they but knew.

(Sūratu-l-Aʿkābūt 29:64)

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

wa qur-rabbi-ʾghfir wa-ʾrḥam wa aṅta khayru-r-raḥimīn

Say: ‘My Lord, forgive and be merciful!

You are the Best of the Merciful.’

(Sūratu-l-Muʾminūn 23:118)



What we can understand from all of this is that the way *par excellence* to the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ comes through actively asking for forgiveness and vowing to cease those acts or actions which brought about the need for forgiveness in the first place. It is a manifestation of the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ upon his worshippers that He reaches out during the night so that those who have sinned during the day may repent and He reaches out during the day in order that those who have sinned during the night might repent.

He forgives all sins, all mistakes, so we should actively seek His Mercy, however great and many our faults may be. Allāh ﷻ says:

وَمَنْ يَفْنُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ

wa mañy-yaqānaṭu mir-raḥmati rabbihi °illa-d-ḍallūn

Who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except for those astray?"

(Sūratu-l-Ḥijr 15:56)

Indeed the Prophet ﷺ himself, who was after all beyond sinning (*ma'ṣūm*/معصوم), used to seek forgiveness frequently during the day and night and said of himself, "I swear by Allāh, I seek the forgiveness of Allāh ﷻ and make *tawbah* to Allāh ﷻ seventy times each day." (Bukhārī).

Abu Dāwūd narrated on the authority of Ibn °Umar that he said, "We used to count the Prophet ﷺ in a single sitting, saying, 'Oh my Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance. Truly, You are the One Who accepts repentance, the Most-Merciful', one hundred times."

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالسَّحَرِ

aṣ-ṣābirīna wa-ṣ-ṣadiqīna wa-l-qanītina

wa-l-munfiqīna wa-l-mustaghfirīna bi-l-aṣḥār

those who are patient in adversity, and true to their word,
and truly devout, and who spend [in the Way of Allāh],
and pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts

(Sūrah °Al °Imrān 3:17)

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ • وَبِالسَّحَرِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

kānū qalīlam-mina-l-layli mā yahja°ūn

wa bi-l-°aṣḥāri hum yastaghfirūn

They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night,
and at the coming of dawn
would pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts.

(Sūratu-dḥ-Dhāriyāt 51:17)

It is a manifestation of the Mercy (*raḥmah*) of Allāh ﷻ that He promises a generous reward for seeking forgiveness (°*istighfār*), and repenting (*tawbah*) which brings forth, and draws out, the Divine Mercy and success in this life and the next.

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

wa tūbū ʾila-llāhi jamīʿan ʾayyuha-l-muʾminūna laʿallakum tufliḥūn

O you believers - all of you - turn unto Allāh in repentance,
so that you might attain to a happy state!

(Sūratu-n-Nūr 24:31)

When one performs a lot of *ʾistighfār* and *tawbah* sincerely, Allāh ﷻ will prevent calamities and different types of tribulations from affecting one, as Allāh ﷻ says:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

wa mā kāna-llāhu muʿadḥḍibahum wa hum yastaghfirūn

And Allāh would not punish them while they seek forgiveness.

(Sūratu-l-ʾAʾfāl 8:33)

Making much *ʾistighfār* and *tawbah* also removes sorrow and distress, saves one from awkward situations and brings provision from unexpected sources. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever makes *ʾistighfār* frequently, Allāh ﷻ will make a way for him out of every distress and provide for him from sources he could never expect.”

The people of *ʾimān* and *taqwah* make a lot of *ʾistighfār* and *tawbah*, but these are not empty words. Rather, these words must be deeply rooted in the heart. One must have true regret for the sins and faults that one has committed and be determined never to commit them again. These are the conditions of sincere *tawbah* which Allāh ﷻ enjoins on His worshippers and for which He promises forgiveness, mercy and the Garden.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ
عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

yā ʾayyuha-l-ladhīna ʾāmanū tūbū ʾila-llāhi tawbatan naṣūḥan

ʿasa rabbukum ʾaṅy-yukaffira ʿaṅkum sayyiʾātikum

wa yudākḥilakum jannātin tajārī min taḥṭiha-l-ʾanhār

O ye who believe! Turn unto Allāh in sincere repentance!
It may be that your Lord will remit from you your evil deeds
and bring you into Gardens beneath which rivers flow.

(Sūratu-t-Taḥrīm 66:8)



Now we have made our way back to where we began, which is the Garden of Mercy. From here, as recipients of that Divine Mercy, we must now become the distributors of the Mercy, in keeping with the deep sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ which we mentioned at the beginning.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa māā °arsalnākāā °illa-raḥmatal-li-l-°ālamīn

And We have not sent you except as a Mercy for all the worlds.

(Sūratu-l-°Ambiyāā° 21:107)

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ
لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

laqadā kāna lakum fī rasūli-llāhi °uswatun ḥasanatun
li-māñ kāna yarju-llāha wa-l-yawma-l-°ākḥira
wa dhakara-llāha kathīrā

You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allāh,
for all who put their hope in Allāh and the Last Day
and remember Allāh much.

(Sūratu-l-Aḥzāb 33:21)

Having received the Mercy, we must become the Mercy, and fulfill the Plan of Allāh ﷻ from the beginning, which is to become His Representatives (*khulafā°*) here upon this earth.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

wa-°idh qāla rabbuka li-l-malā°ikati innī jā°ilun fi-l-arḍi kḥalīfah
and when your Sustainer said to the angels:

“Truly, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it.”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:30)

When we return to our selves as Allāh ﷻ created us and intended us to be, we enter the deep truth and reality (*ḥaqiqiah*) of our being and regain our rightful inheritance (*warāṭḥah*/وراثه) and fulfill the promise we made before time began, when Allāh ﷻ gathered all the essence (*dhurr*) of all the souls that would ever be and asked:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى
أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۖ شَهِدْنَا ۚ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا
كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

wa-°idh °akhḥadha rabbuka mim-banī °ādama
min ḍḥuhūrihim ḍhurriyyatahum wa °ashḥadahum °alāā °añfusihi
°alastu bi-rabbikum ; qālū balā ṣḥahidānā ;
an taqūlū yawma-l-qiyyāmati °innā kunnā °añ ḥadḥa ghāfilīn

When your Sustainer took out all their descendants
from the loins of the children of Adam
and made them testify against themselves ‘Am I not your Lord?’
they said, ‘We testify that indeed You are!’
Lest you say on the Day of Rising, ‘We knew nothing about this.’
(Sūratu-l-A°rāf 7:172)

And now we know when we remember and when we remember
then we know and when we know we become responsible to fulfill
the trust that the heavens and the earth and the mountains refused.

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا
وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ ۖ

°innā °araḍna-l-°āmānata °ala-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi wa-l-jibālī fa
°abayna aňy-yaḥmilnahā wa °ashḥaḥna minhā wa ḥamalaha-l-°iňsān
We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains,
but they refused to take it on and shrank from it.

But the humans took it on...

(Sūratu-l-°Aḥzāb 33:72)



That Trust, most simply put, is to be the Mercy here on this earth to
all creatures great and small regardless of who or what they are,
what color their skin, what language they speak, what tribe they
come from and all of the animals and creatures that live here and
even what is inanimate as well. This is what Allāh ﷻ offered and
this is what we must do if we are to fulfill our Trust.

Further:

This understanding of the reciprocity of Mercy is truly an immense one. If adopted on a large scale, which is of course what Allāh ﷻ originally intended and, I believe, ultimately intends, our world would be a very different place than what we are currently experiencing economically, environmentally, politically — indeed on just about every level that can be thought of or imagined.

In my earlier talk/essay on peace I referenced in passing a song of John Lennon called “*Imagine*”. In this song he asks us to imagine a world without heaven or hell; where there is no religion and nothing to kill or die for and all the people just “live for today”.

Truthfully I cannot imagine a world where there is no heaven or hell; a world in which there is no religion, nor a world where there is nothing to kill, though I would prefer to phrase it as fight or struggle or die for as long as there is so much blatant injustice in the world which must be stood up to and so many oppressed people who must be stood up for lest injustice and oppression rule everywhere. And, beyond that, I cannot “imagine” living just for today when there is so much more to live for.

On the other hand one would have to be hopelessly naïve to imagine a world in which people are truly merciful and that mercy, or *rahmah*, as such, was the foundation upon which all transactions were based and the criteria by which all choices were made. That would be nothing less than fanciful, much as we might want it to be.

The Prophet ﷺ had, and was, a secret and, with his death, that secret was, for all intents and purposes, and to the greatest extent, lost to the world. He *was* the Mercy and Allāh ﷻ applied to him a Name that was exclusively reserved for His Own Being. A Name never applied to any other human being:

رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

rahmatal-li-l-‘ālamīn

Mercy for all the worlds.

(Sūratu-l-‘Ambiyā‘ 21:107)

Certainly by some sixty years after the Hijra of the Prophet ﷺ and the events that took place at Karabalā', which witnessed the death and martyrdom of Sayidinā al-Ḥusayn ؑ, all pretense that such a world did or could exist was lost to the generality of the 'official' Muslim community. That this is true can be known from the words of Ibn Taymiyyah many centuries later who famously declared, "Sixty years with an unjust ruler are preferable to one night with an ineffective one."

The events of Karbalā' put signed and sealed to any idea that spiritual guidance and Divine Guidance were to be expected of, or looked for, from political leaders and that assured corruption and venality along with cruelty in the service of the 'community' and religious establishment would henceforth, with a few exceptions, rule and that few of the scholars (*ulamā'*/علماء) could or would ever say anything about it, preferring stability, unanimity and silence instead.

"Don't rock the boat!" would be, and remains today, the order of the day throughout the Muslim world, Sunni or Shī'a, again with a few exceptions over the intervening centuries since the death of the Prophet ﷺ and, finally, the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn ؑ.

The sole challenge to the stultifying silence and communal acceptance of corruption and cruelty was, and remains, the emergence of Ṣūfism which, arguably, alone has kept alive the secret of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, the "Mercy to all the worlds" or *rahmatat-li-l-ālamīn* by consistently and constantly teaching and, indeed, insisting on Mercy, Love, Justice, Freedom and actual realisation, as well, as manifestation in daily life. of the message of the Prophet ﷺ.

Not as political expediency but as spiritual reality.

Throughout the centuries the light of 'Islam was gradually extinguished as a *reality* foretold by the Prophet ﷺ who said, 'A time will come in the near future when there will be nothing left of 'Islām except its name. And there will be nothing left of the Qur'ān except its words. The *masājīd* of that age will be full of people, but will be empty of righteousness. Their scholars (*ulemā'*) will be the worst creatures under the heaven. Discord will rise from them and will come right back to them." (al-Baihaqi in *al-Mishkat Kitāb-ul 'Ilm*)

Abū Hurayrah relates that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Islam began as something strange, and it will become strange again just like it was at the beginning, so blessed are the strangers.” [Sahīh Muslim]

“... ʾIslām began as something strange, and it will become strange again just like it was at the beginning, so blessed are the strangers who restore what the people corrupt of my Sunnah.” [Sunan at-Tirmidhī (2630) [at-Tirmidhī grades it as good and authentic (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*)]. °Abd Allāh bin °Amr b. al-°As relates that the Prophet ﷺ, said one day, when the Companions رضي الله عنهم were with him: “Blessed are the strangers.” He was then asked: “Who are the strangers, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied: “They are righteous people among many evil people who disobey them more than they obey them.” [Musnad Ahmad (2/177 & 2/222). This estrangement is typified by the small number of those who assist in doing right and the few of those who answer the call to Allāh ﷻ. Another aspect of this estrangement is the difficulty faced by the one who attempts to travel on the straight path without stumbling. Evil and iniquity will continue to increase and righteousness will continue to decrease as the time between the people and the era of prophethood grows yet longer. It becomes more and more difficult to achieve anything of benefit without getting involved in something detrimental as well. It is difficult to do what is best, due to the great number of impediments that discourage a person from even trying.”

Standing against the flood of evil and iniquity and insisting on the primary message of the Prophet ﷺ of Mercy to all and malice toward none are the ʾawliya karam and the shuyūkh, murshids and pirs of the vairous turūq, taʾifah and schools of taṣṣawwuf (تصوّف).

These are our lights in what is an increasingly dark age.

The blessed strangers are those who find their way against the flood of evil and iniquity to the safety of their teachings and guidance.

The zāwiyah, ribāt or tekke and the circles within them that the teachers of Mercy establish are the lifeboats that take the strangers lost in the oceans of evil and iniquity to the shores of Mercy.

Those who seek Mercy in the present age should know they will seldom find that Mercy in the madrassahs or colleat ash-shariʿah.

Mercy — رحمة

If you want to find Mercy and the Teachings of Mercy you must seek out the Teachers of that Mercy and they are none other than the °awliyā° karam and the shuyūkh, murshids and pirs we have mentioned and, even with them, you have to be on the lookout to be sure that you have not found a wolf in sheepskin, a shopkeeper pir, a seller of tickets for voyages that never reach shore, or pretenders who sell out to the political or religious establishment but who in reality stand with the forces of war and oppression against those of mercy and justice. You must find the real ones, the sincere ones.

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ط

kataba rabbukum °alā nafsihī-r-raḥmah

Your Lord has written Mercy on His Self.

(Sūratu-l-°An°ām 6:54)

“I was not sent to call down curses on people, but as a Mercy. I am Muḥammad, who Praises Allāh ﷻ, and Aḥmad, who is praised by Allāh ﷻ, and I am Haṣṣir, the last Prophet in whose presence the people will gather. I am the Prophet of Repentance and the Prophet for whose sake the door of repentance will always remain open. I am the Prophet of Mercy who says, “The Most Merciful shows mercy to those who have mercy on others. Show mercy to those on earth, and the One beyond the heavens will show mercy to you.”

Oh Allāh ﷻ, have mercy on us above the earth and below the earth and on the Day when our deeds will be presented to us. And cause us to be merciful to one another. And have mercy on our dead ones and put those who have mercy from among Your servants in charge of us, Oh Most Merciful! (yāā °arḥamu-r-raḥimīn / يا أرحم الراحمين)



wa-llāhu °alim

☆ اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّىْ اَسْئَلُكَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ الَّتِيْ رَحِمْتَ بِهَا نَبِيَّكَ مُحَمَّدًا وَّبَنِيَّكَ اَبِيْكَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ ☆

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